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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEGUCIGALPA 000543

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: HONDURAS COUP SITREP #12 07/06/2009 AS OF 1600
LOCAL (1800 EDT)

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 535

[1](#)B. STATE 69221

[1](#)C. TEGUCIGALPA 533

[1](#)D. TEGUCIGALPA 537

[1](#)E. TEGUCIGALPA 532

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Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

Protests Continue; Tensions Remain High

[1](#)1. (C) Following his attempt to land at Toncontin Airport yesterday, President Zelaya landed first in Nicaragua and finally in San Salvador. President Mauricio Funes of El Salvador held a press conference at Comalapa airport late last night with Zelaya, OAS SYG Insulza and other presidents (Kirchner, Correa, and Lugo). Exact travel plans for President Zelaya have him departing Managua at 1900 hrs (Managua time) and arriving in Washington at 1300 hrs (DC time). The de facto regime reportedly sent Congress President Jose Antonio Saavedra and political consultant Arturo Corrales to hold talks in San Salvador with Zelaya representatives.

[1](#)2. (U) Zelaya supporters re-grouped this morning following yesterdays protests at Toncontin Airport, but the group broke up by 1300 local (1500 EDT). Pro-Zelaya supporters not from Tegucigalpa spent the night at the Pedagogical University. The Honduran military (HOAF) parked military aircraft on the runway overnight to ensure aircraft could not land. The aircraft is still on the tarmac and 400 soldiers are currently at the airport. This morning, a group of 4,000 Zelaya supporters concentrated near the Presidential Palace at the Clarion Hotel and dispersed by 1400 local. Police in San Pedro Sula report that a pro-Zelaya group comprised of an estimated 800 demonstrators marched from the northern part of the city to the Central Park. These pro-Zelaya protesters coordinated the marches with local police, who provided escort and protection. Stores in central San Pedro Sula were closed due to the demonstration.

¶3. (U) Post has received conflicting casualty reports following Sunday's events at the airport. Honduran police (HNP) confirm one death and four injured. Human Rights NGOs are reporting two deaths and 10 injured. One of the four injured protesters, Guillermo Lopez, is related to Zelaya's Banking Commission president and former Foreign Minister and presidential advisor, Milton Jimenez. HNP report the demonstrators damaged buildings in the vicinity of the airport and ransacked the KFC that had been the target of an improvised bombing last week (Ref E). The demonstrations in San Pedro Sula over the weekend were reportedly peaceful. RSO reports one incident of anti-American graffiti at a Mission leased residence.

¶4. (U) There are no reports of planned protests by Micheletti supporters today. Unconfirmed reports indicate there is a pro-Micheletti march planned for tomorrow, Tuesday July 7 between 1100 and 1300 local time (1300 to 1500 EDT). Zelaya supporters plan to meet again tomorrow, July 7, at 800 (1000 EDT) at the National Autonomous University of Honduras.

¶5. (SBU) The curfew start time was moved up Sunday with minimal warning but returns to the previous time and will start at 22:00 to 05:00 (24:00 to 07:00 EDT) tonight, Monday July 6. Reports indicate HNP made 146 arrests nationwide for curfew violations overnight, an almost tenfold increase from the previous night.

Political Developments; Public Opinion

¶6. (SBU) Following yesterday's attempt by President Zelaya to land at Toncontin airport, civil aviation authorities reportedly plan to make a formal complaint against Venezuela for infringement of Honduran airspace. A report on the attempt by President Zelaya to land is to be submitted to the de facto regime today and is anticipated to result in a

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formal denouncement of Venezuela by the de facto regime.

¶7. (C) Media outlets report and low-level contacts at the Public Ministry confirm an arrest warrant has been issued for Zelaya Administration Minister of the Presidency Enrique Flores Lanza alleging removal of 40 million lempiras (approximately USD 2.1 million) from the Central Bank. The warrant claims the illegal withdrawal took place on June 24. Press reports claim the cash withdrawal was made at the order of President Zelaya.

¶8. (U) An open letter to the Ambassador, the Inter-American Press Association, and the OAS was published today in "Tiempo," a national circulation daily published in San Pedro Sula by long-time Zelaya financial backer Jaime Rosenthal, alleging the de facto government had restricted freedom of expression at "Tiempo," as well as at TV channels 11 and 12 and cable television service Cablecolor, which are also controlled by the Rosenthal Family. The letter alleges several violations on June 28 and 29, including censorship and cutting off electrical power. The letter alleges that in one incident, armed soldiers went to Cable Color offices on June 28 and ordered them to cut transmissions, specifically those of CNN. (Comment: to Embassy's knowledge, Channel 11 and "Tiempo" were the only media outlets that reported the July 3 press conference by dissident members of Congress denouncing the June 28 coup. End Comment.)

¶9. (C) Radio Journalist Gabriel Fino Noriega of Radio America was shot dead on July 3 in Atlantida Department. Motives for his murder have not been determined, but Radio America has been the subject of intimidation lately. An unexploded hand grenade was found at its offices last week.

Infrastructure and Communications

¶10. (U) Airport officials confirm that Toncontin Airport in Tegucigalpa remains closed today and the Honduran civil aviation agency, Direccion de Aeronautica Civil (DGAC), announced the airport will remain closed through Friday July

¶10. Post is working to confirm this closure. San Pedro Sula airport remains open for international flights, and American, Continental and Delta airlines continue to operate flights as

usual to and from that destination.

¶11. (C) There are still sporadic power and water outages zone by zone. After being closed for seven days, Radio Catracha and pro-Zelaya Channel 36 are back on the air, but staff inform Emboffs they are cautious about reporting on unconfirmed events. Public Affairs notes that Channels 11, 36, and Spanish CNN have been using Venezuela-based Telesur coverage in their broadcasts.

Consular and Embassy Operations

¶12. (SBU) Post continues to closely follow Washington guidance on no contact with the Micheletti regime. MCC Honduras has previously authorized funds to last approximately one week. Current projections are that a suspension of the program until November would have the same impact as cancellation.

¶13. (SBU) JTF-Bravo remains on lock-down with some reported demonstrations in Comayagua but not in the immediate vicinity of the airbase. Honduran Armed Forces are providing perimeter security.

¶14. (U) The Embassy is open for emergency services to Amcits only today and plans to re-open tomorrow, July 7, for non-immigrant and immigrant visa interviews and all regular American citizen services. A decision for consular services for July 8 will be made in the course of the day tomorrow. Embassy will continue to operate with a liberal leave policy in place for employees who are impeded or feel unsafe getting to the Embassy.

¶15. (U) The Consular Section has received welfare and whereabouts inquiries on more than 500 Amcits to date via telephone and email. Post issued a new warden message last night and will be preparing one this afternoon as well. Consular Section continues to regularly update ACS talking

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points on the Embassy website, and has advised Amcits to abide by the curfew.

¶16. (SBU) Post held an EAC at 1400 local (1600 EDT) to discuss civil unrest tripwires for authorized departure. Another EAC will take place tomorrow at the same time.

LLORENS